

# **DRYLAND**

**LOS ANGELES UNDERGROUND ART & WRITING**

SOUTH CENTRAL LOS ANGELES, CA

# DRYLAND

## LOS ANGELES UNDERGROUND ART & WRITING

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"Golden Midnight Blues" by Luka Fisher

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### ABOUT

*DRYLAND* started in 2015 and is based in South Central Los Angeles. Los Angeles, the land of all skin colors and all classes. We're looking for Los Angeles. Waste...decay... rebirth and all. We are dedicated to publishing the best poetry, prose, and art of the Los Angeles literary underground (and beyond), and prioritize works by people of color.

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We accept submissions all year. We look for strong voices, thought-provoking works that communicate beyond the technical show of words, and seek to illuminate a truth for the reader; works that are true to the excitement and urgency of expression. We are proud to publish previously unpublished writers, emerging talents, and established authors. We do not accept work that sustains the traditional white literary Western canon that has continuously ignored and poised itself as an authority over the voices of the oppressed. We do not give a voice to stories from the perspectives of cisgender, heterosexual, white, upper-class males that continue this tradition. We also do not give a voice to feminist works that only consider white female perspectives. Read full guidelines on our website.

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the first print edition of *DRYLAND*.

I come from a place that can hardly be called a community. It is still largely underserved and underrepresented, and it is still considered a food, arts, and employment desert. There are dreams waiting to be born in this wasteland. Through poetry I have met supportive people and made a handful of good friends many of whom are artists, musicians, and poets from South Central—I believe this to be a gift I have received. We have a lot of work ahead of us, yes, but the first part is done—finding each other in the dark.

I dedicate this first print edition of *DRYLAND* to those who wanted to speak but could not, souls seeking other souls, those who are poets but do not know it yet, those who want to learn, explore their world, or share their knowledge and imagination but are deemed unworthy by a society that chains our potential leaders and artists to overwhelming financial debt. This is to honor those we have left behind, those whose dreams were never born, and to be a light post for those whose dreams that with the smallest amount of hope are being cradled, I hope these pages find you.

Oh and Fuck Trump.

*Anna Ureña*

# ***POEMS***





*Jamal Parker*

"how to survive in florida the next four years"

you don't  
the linger of a gun is too close  
your mother is on the verge of collapsing  
because when your baby brother goes missing  
she fears of his silhouette on the news

you know the Red State  
like the predominant color of a flag  
like leftover blood on the orlando sidewalk  
you know it has a knack for black boys in caskets

you don't think about it / jordan davis died four years ago  
because you are alive today / trayvon died four years ago  
you were alive today  
and someone might say that four years from now

*Originally published in Issue 5 - Poets In Unity:  
Responses to the Election of Donald Trump.*

***Laurin DeChae***

"the helix of the cosmos is the lyrical"

my mother snips the braid that hangs the length of me.  
i say, i want to keep what makes me.

there is no pause, a hand motion, and scissors snowflake my curls.  
a shrub  
taming. in a bag she collects the hair and labels it *crow*.

the kinky mess, she says, knots  
around my fingers and my hands are tied. then snaps,

spoil the child and spare the rod and spare the hand that spoiled the  
child  
and sharpen the rod that spoiled the child for later.

both thinking of the baggie of hair.  
do as i say, not as i do. do as i say  
she says. i say, she says. thinly, a breeze sways me.  
the mother is not a nursery, which is why i incubate in fiction:

*of the spiraling mystic who saw visions in the wild sea  
and incanted the sea opaque.  
her body flickered in the waveless water like unmoored holograms.  
her mouth was a perch for lost, circling birds.  
and the girl floated apart.*

***Laurin DeChae***

"and/ she/ hung/ singing"

and / she / hung / singing/  
against/ everything / she / believed

cradled like the Pietà consoles.  
in that first still moment

she bends to whisper in my ear  
*a wonder, your body and the world fell.*

*I am trying to speak in a different register*  
the muttered register of the *halfbreed*

that spit i hold. sewn, they diagnose  
a unique bent. patchworked & flexible

my body becomes  
& splits open. i can bloom & bloom & bloom

this is how i feel better about myself. this is how i make  
my own distractions. i'll lock my bird in a cage and pretend to fly.

*Laurin DeChae*

"diorama: dummy & mannequin play operation"

dummy wishes he were meat    mannequin begs

leave me empty            and roaring

to scoop                            the echoes

attempting god-speak    monkey babble

that scratches            cardboard            like records

remixing            an entanglement

so easily punctured                            bled out & boxed up

excess    the trim the fat the distance            of softness

how i know    you don't:            you still

only grab            my pretty

*Paul Edward Costa*

"I Met My Childhood Hero, And He Wants To Kill Me"

I met the Emperor only once,  
    looked in his eyes  
    and saw a familiar  
        wrathful lunacy  
in place of  
        divine love,  
unless cupid constructed his compound bow  
    for the purpose of disfiguring god's image,  
                    his template  
                    when anointing rulers of  
the earth.

In him  
the new courtiers saw  
    a stoic figure  
    dignifying the indifference  
        of the  
            disconnected  
on the throne where the old ministers saw  
                    the still-born  
corpse of an idea.

*John Grey*  
"Spring"

the optimum time  
for romantic/employment  
opportunities

bird sightings

and pap smears;

if this is going to work,  
I advise you to  
bury yourself in fresh loam  
where possible

and be sensitive to  
random communications  
from total strangers;

like most of us  
who are ruled  
by emotion and hunger

be aware of the voices  
within yourself -

both conscious and  
“what’s in it for me?”

factor them into  
your various presentations;

meanwhile,  
don’t dump the people  
who love you already

or the current job  
that pays little  
but pays at least;

and don't act suspiciously  
when around forms  
and jewelry store windows –

and adhere to deadlines -  
they have your best interests at heart.

*John Grey*

"Trying To Appear Tougher Than I Am"

What you think you're doing?  
Peeking through a plank with a five inch-knothole.  
Fake ID from three different states.  
Sneaking into the old movie house without paying.  
Staring at the Old Master and declaring,  
I can paint better than this shit.  
A preference for the words "bush league"  
to describe just about everything.  
Add in a shambling gait that's almost a shuffle.  
A constant look of self-amusement.  
And the title - the Baron of Brag.

At seventeen, someone has the nerve to ask,  
"What do you think you're doing?"  
There's construction going on in there.  
I really could do with a drink.  
I've already spent my allowance.  
The nudes I get but why must they be painted so chubby?  
"Bush league" - it's a saying of my old man.  
Yeah, exactly,  
to describe just about anything.  
The walk is something I saw in a video.  
And, let's face it, even if the joke's on me,  
I can't give anyone the satisfaction.  
You're right. What do I have to brag about?  
By the way, the word is "barren" not "Baron."



*Rae Liberto*

"Not So"

I am afraid there will be no place to be soft  
that there will be great fear of being found open.

I am afraid of the extinction of tenderness  
that love will become problematic  
that the joining of hands will be seen as  
holding back.

I am afraid to generate lies.

I am afraid to believe my untruth and to have  
no whisper in my ear saying, not so.

I am afraid we will not find each other in the dark.

Sing me a song so I can feel you.

Do you hear that?

Those are the places where we touch.  
Let us touch there, and here too.

I see you louder.

I hear your hands touching my hands brightly.

There is no use for our mouths anymore.  
We are silent and singing to not be afraid.

What will become of our voices without an audience?

I watch as words become sharp teeth on shoulders  
understanding well why we chew at each other.

I want my mouth on your mountains.

I keep finding stones under my tongue.

Small stones and smaller bones.

My lips create a seam around them

and my mouth sinks.

Don't look.

*Originally published in Issue 5 - Poets In Unity:*

*Responses to the Election of Donald Trump.*

*Dustin Pickering*

"Hope"

Festering.

This is the edge of hope  
where curtains fall  
and follow through with an actor's murder.

Plans.

Made, unmade.  
Dreams to sit in the lukewarm water  
of our friendship.  
There are hats on the couch  
and placemats on the dinner table.  
Is it yet time?

Time.

Does time exist in the heads  
of false witnesses?  
Are our thoughts responsible for who we become?  
Am I one of the few who ate the unknown  
and took fallow hearts to lunch?

All things.

Considering the premise  
of the rampart's destruction,  
my kiss is a semblance of passion...  
someone is perplexed in this audacious night.

I linger toward opening the hissing battlefield,  
and I desire that gems sink into my heart.  
Perhaps only the best words are left unspoken.  
We never knew each other.  
Neither of us saw the path to hope.

*Dustin Pickering*  
"Rahab of the Silver Snows"

Someone had to flirt with the errors  
we face, when midnight blurs a teary star  
from the face of the ancients.

I deserve something new—  
fresh and original, unable to mute its mouth.  
Spontaneity offers the silence of fossilized fear.

I begin my song at Jericho,  
Rahab of the Silver Snows:  
you flap your scarf in the fluttering winds.

Scarlet, the hue of whoredom, becomes austere.  
You embrace winter like a gun  
that shot before paradise became alluvial.

I buried my last wish:  
Rahab, hope is left to you  
and we *are* already redeemed.

*Angelique Gross*  
"Birthdays"

Orange light from the sunset against a living room wall makes me hold my breath.

I'm reluctantly pulled back -

To when I was a child and would be left at a friend's house  
they're about to have dinner so their parents begrudgingly invite me to eat with them.

But they don't cook their meatloaf in ketchup,

they turn off Jeopardy while they eat,

And they don't use enough sugar in their kool-aid.

Kindness has slowed down time and I just wanna go home.

My mom says not be rude.

Says that I should call my father on his birthday.

It's the day before my brothers.

The brother that flashes back to the war.

The one that's been intoxicated since.

My vulgar Seymour Glass.

Who probably won't be around this time next fall.

I dial up the facility and ask for his room.

It's the kind of place where everyone is too young to be there.

The nurse hesitates then connects the call.

I quickly say "Happy Birthday" and imagine black roses at his bedside.

Luckily he's never listened hard enough to notice my lack of sincerity.

I imagine an orange light stretched eternities across his face  
and wonder where evil goes when it vacates a body.

He says "love you" and as always I reply "Mmm Hmm. Talk later."

I don't know why I call him but I suppose it's for the same reasons  
She wants me to.

She pretends he didn't terrorize her.

I pretend that I have some sort of obligation to him because he's sick.

I pretend that I know who he is. I pretend I haven't only met him three times in my life.

I pretend, at least while speaking to him, that he didn't genetically predispose my brother failure and depression.

I do it because I don't want to be rude. Just like her.

I think about my father and am glad he wasn't in my life, so when I say I hate men

I don't put an asterisk next to it, like all those white people whose uncles are cops

(is every cop an uncle?)

I give myself personality quizzes depending on my mood

"Which Death Deity Are You?!"

Today I feel like Yama.

I wait for the wall to turn black so that I can breathe again.

*Emelia Reuterfors*  
"Marked By Height"

a bomb cannot have  
a broken back. can only  
take the arms of others, yet

this is another  
homogenous push.

(hughug)

the good-looking  
converged like

little trees and scum:  
so cooperative without limbs,

to float or stand alone  
inside ghost waters  
turquoise plasm.

parts surface from the whole,  
and aftershock  
billows like bleach

that had finally arrived.

*Emelia Reuterfors*

"Summer"

even the Romans drowned.  
even the horses drowned.  
even a canary can drown.

our experiments take float, to  
take a step away. odd

there's nothing left to play with  
alone in an empty pool.



**Howie Good**  
"Apocalypse Wow"

On Berlin Street, a vehicle hit a deer. Someone was verbally harassing children on Barre Street. And no cops for miles. People were using drugs at Hubbard Park. Now they see sky, and they remember what they are. On State Street, a missing dog was spotted. Wolf, are you there? I didn't believe my friends when they first told me. To hell with it. You say, "Yes, yes, no, yes." And it happens. You keep going. Look at the sunny side, even if your house is burning.

\*

The police hate making lists of all the items stolen overnight from unlocked vehicles – radar detectors, golf clubs, laptops, cameras, sunglasses, CDs, cigarettes, and loose change. But you use things as you need them. Everything flows. Velocity is advancing everywhere. Do you want to die on the hill? Do you think this is going away? They don't want to turn off the information, ever. You can see everywhere the end of resistance, the dust of this planet, the marvelous clouds.

*Originally published in Issue 5 - Poets In Unity:  
Responses to the Election of Donald Trump.*

*Nate Maxson*  
"Ad Nauseam"

I'm on a train in the dark, curled up in my seat pretending to sleep/  
starry rave lights, anticipatorily flicker in the windows and the  
body of the thing

Riddled with one way engine-holes, through which pinpricks of the  
landscape flash by cinematically

But inside, objects are in motion

Men dressed like mechanics are hauling large, heavy looking  
crates through the aisles

I know what is inside/ where the tracks end, you can feel the slow-  
down: not yet

All the passengers are faking it too

Watching with one eye, like cautious crocodiles

My first experience with such machinery was from lingering imag-  
es of the Siberian winter in the film *Dr. Zhivago*, so I know where  
this is going

We all know (what untimed fauna stands just outside the roads and  
paths carved through)

In the end

Everything wakes up

*Nate Maxson*  
"T-Minus/ Un, Deux, Trois"

**1**

It's a literal transcription of a foreign language  
Look, here is an archaeological memory trapped between panes of  
glass  
Edges made of delicate sheet metal like my lover's body when we  
were very young  
A high, bone to bow, glass pitch: let's begin

**2**

Coming through the hallways, white light against tranquilizer  
Different promises made on behalf of the zero  
I don't need any of them  
Just ink and to remember a name  
Sing for me

**3**

After the flood, in the hedgemaze  
After the inebriation, in the west  
After the party, half full champagne flutes full of mosquitos and  
glittering in the big lights  
And we have always lived in the after, who will drink this?  
After the garden went yellow in the sun  
We lost our taste for opera

**Korey Hurni**  
"Infidelity: A Love Song"

Whenever I listen to pop music I am reminded that I am nothing  
more than what I am, a fawn of a man

like a blown-out speaker whose creation myth always re-begins  
the night before, born emasculated in a bathtub filled with gin

wearing headphones blaring Ke\$ha's "Your Love Is My Drug,"  
born hipless strutting what I got, a born bastard or however

you want to imagine me, born a fatalist at the start of a chorus  
trying to love you in the only way I know or can:

like a love song, the kind of music that leaves a bitter taste  
of quinine in your mouth – I could have killed malaria

with these lips – music that made me as much "in love"  
as I wished you were, even as we argued it through the shape

of desire, asking me if I was just horny, if she was beautiful,  
and all I could do was try and hold you, miming "Oh!

Darling" as it roared from some back room in my mind,  
whispering *I'll never do you no harm* until incoherence

overwhelmed our lives and we became two strangers  
staring into a display window of our respective lives at that brief  
occasional

moment when the mannequin actually reminds us of our self,  
our impossible self, all posture, composed and unreachable,

admirable for its isolation, with its every possibility known and  
certain,

thus forgivable, yet all the while knowing we can't be that,

because what is desire but a return to the actual.

This is why I thought you as an Eileen

when we first met, you wore that yellow dress that made my  
thoughts verge,

where I pulled you around the dance floor singing, *come on*,

back when I thought there was love in unhooking

a bra with one hand, when I thought love was made to forget

that everything beautiful is momentary

and that anything momentary is equally what is and what will  
never

be again. I did not yet believe in that gravity

we put on memory. This was not the style of life

I imagined for myself, not in this orbital melody

of a love song: "I" this, "I" that, this pop music,

all on repeat, hear it bumpin' like a countdown,

Queen B grindin'. What delusion out of desperation, wanting

you to lay all your love on me even when I prized a sort of care-  
lessness

or truth, the difference between the appearing spectacle

of the moon and its more approximate dullness. I would tell myself  
for months after that I couldn't admit anything

because some part of me still wanted to see you laughing in my  
own version

of "Purple Rain." I often daydreamt of playing that guitar, wailing

the way Prince did when he played the Super Bowl,  
of being a spectacle, exalted, adorned, burning holy

as though reentering the atmosphere, redefining glory  
even though you think of me as you think of me,

and even though there is no dignity to be made of this now.

*Bryan Edenfield*

"Utopia XXI"

My window is adorned with planets.

Waiting is the small orgy  
of wet arms and parabola necks.

The moon drapes across  
the gulf of journey and  
canvases the night's geometry.

Later, the jungle cat,  
without garbage to sift through,  
builds a sand tower  
in imitation of the wasp, so

we invented a plant to cure  
your destructive compulsions.

*Bryan Edenfield*

"Utopia XXX"

The prophet buried  
in the soil of Eden  
resurrects herself  
to balance the clock  
and the globe

on her two fingers.  
Now,

my parents are dead.  
I was raised by  
the arms of Kali.



*Thomas Osatchoff*  
"PINK GLASSES (ALL THE COLORS)"

Usually we think of things how they seem. We're elastic bands though we may seem like human beings.

I like licking the white plastic torn pure from the top of white yogurt containers—vanilla. Millions of live bacteria trying to see her in Manila without color and without eyes help to maintain my bodily balance.

In Japan, L and R sound the same.

A samurai was so rich that he commandeered every linguist in the land to give him private tutoring on how to make the L sound so he could tell his American infatuation in English how he felt.

That samurai was so rich that he had every rose in the land squished of its vital fluids then introduced (carefully like a dish of pufferfish) to his system through dialysis. He called it the ultimate purification; his kidneys were found in a state of paralysis.

Some say the samurai had a death wish. When asked why he would go around naked without his sword, he replied: skeletons don't wear clothes; skeletons don't have a grammar for died.

When he did put clothes on, the samurai liked to dress up like the Duke of Wellington. He took pride

in being, of all samurai in all the land, the one who showed the least restraint.

He had a penchant for standing in the sun, a swelling thing, while singing and ringing the bell until he was this close to falling over in a faint. He did this because he wanted to know what it felt like to be Napoleon. He often thought of what the world would be like if Waterloo went the other way.

The diener, eyeing to blow beyond his position and inspired by the guy who smuggled Einstein's brain, put the sword into the samurai's abdomen and eureka! He made art: kidneys that resembled a rose.

Rosebud kidneys.

The diener, now an artist, spoke at his gallery opening of the samurai's last word being a sound something like LOVEBUDS.

Before LOVEBUDS, what he said was: war; peace, whatever. Then he flipped a coin into the air, closed his eyes before it landed on his forehead square—and said a sound something like LOVEBUDS. Froze, it was like in his never moving again that he captured it.

Within the magnetic mirrors of some sort of VR headset. Rose glasses

linking how things seem differently to everyone seen through  
the same windows cleaned with pink isopropanol then smashed

vis-à-vis a visa-less dashes across the border. Usually we view flora as green. My unordered digestion  
crosses the colors of the rainbow; the same goes for my general well-being is everything white elastic  
when nothing is face-to-face I bend to lick organic white yogurt via inorganic white plastic borders

*Thomas Osatchoff*  
"A DIAMOND BIG AS A PLANET"  
*with Michael Lemonick*

Looking out from ideas mistaken for eyes for one another

is time: a weird diamond  
sponge beard  
getting harder and full of emptier,

we are deaf ear tempters clenching diamonds because we come from black holes.

So suckingly drunk on ourselves. This is the meaning of sublime. Seeing only ourselves, spitting out diamonds

of ourselves for reality.

Folding water into so many holes.

Scalding water.

Solding water. Solving, dissolving,

we are soil soldering the blackness of the hole inside us  
collapses forever  
but the search is far from over  
20 quadrillion miles away lies a star more massive than our movie star sun, and orbiting that star  
is a diamond.  
How it works is that  
a Jupiter's worth of carbon offers a gravity crushing itself into crystalline form  
closer, further, closer, further.  
In about five billion years or so  
our God may become a white dwarf corpse  
and our year only a little more than a movie:  
two hours long if it doesn't collapse forever, it becomes  
a diamond. Big as a planet.  
A diamond big enough to quench us.

***Nikolai Garcia***  
**"Beyond November"**

Beyond November...  
Beyond recounts and fear...  
Beyond grief and liberal tears...

There are hearts,  
And there are voices.  
There are marches from coast to coast.  
There is the intense sound of unity,  
And the joy of anger.

There are poets writing sonnets of resistance.  
There are musicians composing a soundtrack  
To our rebellion.  
There are a thousand Donald Trump piñatas  
And they have all been set on fire.

There's a speak-out on the campus.  
There's a gathering on the bridge.  
There's a protest on the freeway.  
And none of it is ending soon.

*Originally published in Issue 5 - Poets In Unity:  
Responses to the Election of Donald Trump.*

*Hannah Rubin*

"never asleep in trump's america"

i texted V and said what if trump is our death drive.

they texted me back a picture of a flag cut in half. and a screenshot of someone saying the words "integrity". i stared in the mirror. i had a face. everything was red on the screen and his voice was a slick lizard worming. i needed to be outside.

down Broadway there were puddles of garbage burning in a long line. cops in rows looking bored, visors at half-mast. shards of blue glass like pebbles ringing between tar and concrete. swastikas inked into the T of Fuck Trump.

i was looking for the bodies but couldn't find them. all i had were the signs that they had once been there, but had since moved on. i turned corners and found more swastikas. then i heard it: lightly, the rushing of anger vibrating in a slow increase. i turned onto Telegraph and fell into into a deep swell of legs and hair and fists and faces that looked no older than 19. i knew no one. i linked arms when they shouted "link arms" and i screamed "not our president" when they shouted "not our president". i was and was not a person, was and was not in a sea of people. the pixelated image of an american flag was shivering in a loop to our left. someone was projecting it out their window from the opposing side of the street, onto the long face of the soon-to-be-Uber building, which was now a mammoth wrapped in white construction plastic. everything baudrillard flooded in me. i could see the blue beams of light dancing from where the small lens was hitting the glass. i could see the rectangles of phone screens recording what i also could see with my own eyes as real. the battle for representation in full force as we each pieced together what it meant for own individual lives now that this potentially genocidal rapist would be running our country.

we yelled “our streets” and i didn’t know if i believed us.

and then the cops appeared, jogging alongside until they broke into speed and spread out in front of us in a long double line. it was a power play — a blocked intersection, the backdrop a dank overpass. everything in capitalism hopeless and in perfect order.

i sat down when someone yelled “everyone sit down!”. i stood back up when someone else yelled “get the fuck up”.

as time passed their linen pants didn’t crease to show it. people spread around like little bugs on a grapefruit and there was less and less and there was more and more and people were getting angry and people were getting sad and some people yelled “move bitch get out the way” while others yelled “please let us keep walking”. chants sparked and fizzled, everything on livestream, waiting. a car was trying to pass through and someone wanted to steal the wheel and ram it into the cops. someone else told them not to be stupid. *this is only the first night. we don’t need your ass getting arrested yet.*

and then it was past three in the morning even though the pink light of the freeway made everything feel like sunset, even though the long block of navy hadn’t shifted. there are no minutes in a police line, it’s only always *now* as time slips over and sheds. i turned and walked to the corner and dialed a Lyft request into my phone, feeling both totally inappropriate and unaware how else to proceed. i was miles from home and completely alone. the Lyft driver appeared and i noticed for the first time how i was standing on a block filled with trees wrapped in christmas lights. in the car he laughed and said *at least he only knows like a hundred words. makes him easy to understand.*

*Originally published in Issue 5 - Poets In Unity:  
Responses to the Election of Donald Trump.*



*Inalegwu Alifa*  
"Stillborn"

Transported on an ambulance  
with my stethoscope fixed  
to my eardrum,  
reading the non-rhythmic flow of the heart  
of the pregnant woman lying down,  
walking not but laid on a stretcher  
through some minutes in  
the Intensive Care Unit  
before the theatre  
like a pack of diazepam,  
antibiotics, hand-gloves and syringes  
on a moving trolley to the apothecary's  
port of encounter with the ebola-infested  
and feverishly dehydrating child.

My hands shiver, my legs muscle-pulling  
at the sight of the breathless,  
lifeless bodies of the young,  
of the old and  
of the foetal baby eight months old  
on my hands  
before cutting off the umbilical cord  
from the placenta of the dead woman.

*Sydney Meeker*  
"The Audacity of Survival"

I am an average man.  
On Nov. 8th, I remembered  
Who I am; a Mexican,  
And a transman, who offends  
by being.  
And I will be offensive.

Trump took a defibrillator  
To my lumpy chest  
To a leftover deadness of deafened hope  
And gave it an ultravolt shot  
Over and fucking over  
To my long-forgotten carapace of identity;  
And god did it hurt:  
But my heart beat fire again.

I woke November 9th a new man;  
For the second time.

*Originally published in Issue 5 - Poets In Unity:  
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*María Cristina Hall*

"Boys are like houses in a biracial, transcontinental state"

Two stuffed bags. A closet arranged from purple to black, customary in Columbia dorms. Chucked an exam hangover into six human-sized boxes, followed by five-dollar margaritas spewing me blue on a viscid wood floor: six legs, three tongues, multiple smart-phones testifying. Then an apartment furnished to eat at the liver, pinching it tight like money. Street finds to compensate: scrubbed record shelves, an impressionist yard framed in gold. My roommate's thick glasses, eraser dust, notes almost rebooking the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals. Seven choking perfume spritzes, for luck.

\*

Two hovering years. Adrià mutated from vellum to liberty, swan song eight times through the Caribbean. Multiplied his specter into nine human-shaped deposits, followed by muscles ticking me blue on my phone: indigent, deaf-eared, pinched in a heartbeat of lubricated ego. Then hypochondria spews herpes from whitescreen to skin, harking me back to his question. Street finds to compensate: a Texan jock, a cult child, Adonis stealing his pinesmell. Erased to a new stability, a gust of wait, the future scudding out on overstretched tentacles. Left a sludge slipway, for luck.

\*

Two potioned poems. Concocted relationships cursing my drive from genesis to mud, buried nine ribs down from atonement. My brain vacuumed into human-sizing mirrors, followed by tweezers clipping me red on a cortisone lake: YouTube yoga, insomniac, a sallow bed of cesspooled escapism. Then twenty-seven strands of rejection letters, pinning a desiccated moth to a millennial sense of purpose. Metaphysical steals to compensate: a poem Mónica de la Torre wrote in my dream, God's voice channeled through a grimy

*garrafón*, a therapist. Churned by a threat cue choked in shoelace,  
a propulsion cradled in tissue flesh, clouds spelling tedium to amaranth.  
Oiled ten hands in violet, for luck.

*Maria Cristina Hall*

"The time I realized I wasn't white"

I was nine and Grandma Miller introduced me  
at the San Diego Pentecostal church.  
I politely kissed her white friend  
on the cheek, to everyone's shock,  
and burned a red backdrop  
to my freckles.

A few years after my quinceañera  
my Spanish boyfriend  
corrected  
algo en las estructuras que no va  
flattened my accent in a cove of love  
a woman's grievances  
folded in papers he'd lock away  
childish confetti.  
Feminism's just a petty excuse  
for my voice silenced  
from radical to analyst  
from beacon to branded  
from brilliant to affirmative action  
from man to woman.  
I hide my phony diploma  
behind my leg  
check from the side of my eye  
if anyone's looking.  
The white boy couldn't get in anywhere  
because he was a white boy.

The time I was most white was when at twenty-five  
I capitalized on your adolescence in Virginia  
knew your South Asian wouldn't let you  
say no to me.  
That's the time I saw myself in you.

The time I was least white was when in Mexico  
a white man took my work  
and didn't invite me to the party.

In Spain at twenty-two  
my teacher called Latin America  
an insult to language  
in front of ten women and an institution  
that said the sun would do enough  
to dry me.

One time I wasn't white and  
didn't realize  
was at nineteen in New York  
when Becca Stein said the Spanish street names  
in my poem were disorienting  
like is this Arizona or Mexico  
because the way you've situated the text  
is confusing  
—to a white woman.

The time I felt most white was when  
at eighteen I read David Foster Wallace on SWE  
and agreed.  
The time I felt least white was when  
fuck you.

The time I felt least white was when  
people only care  
if your camera won't show your color negative  
if you can afford a camera, SWE, BMW, 401K.

The time I was least white was when  
insurance is only for residents  
and they pick up the phone and say who's speaking

And I say María Fernández.

The time I felt least white was when  
I had a skinny iced latte in Polanco  
and my girlfriends said Chicanos  
weren't really Mexican.

The time I felt most white  
was when I laughed along.

*Henry Goldkamp*  
"That Catholic Gamble"

going back to church  
after the middle and index  
little card fingers  
hold the smoke : leather  
turns into the hands shook  
at bars for the hell of it  
without names introduced  
no words just grips hardly  
shakes just shakes  
for the hell of it :  
and both felt the hell  
of it because leather  
from a man-god : Jesus is  
your friend so spray Him  
brown slap His ass toss this  
guy a beer : he had a rough one



*Cori Bratby-Rudd*

"So you say you want to see LA"

So you want to see LA,  
    I will show you the bright lights of this  
        Underworld.  
Be warned: it is not a revolving door.

Creativity is relative  
    We form what we know.  
        Watch  
Hollywood off screen  
    For a real show.

Loneliness becomes complicated in cities  
    The rush of people, makes it hard to forget being alone.  
        One day here and you will find:

A vet  
    With his "property of  
        US Navy" tattooed  
        Behind  
        Graffitied walls  
    Busy being a king of nothing at all.

Mumbling about his days  
    In war.  
        Smoking spliffs the size of this wasteland.  
        The size of the place we were all reborn.

His  
    Vibrating tongue ring  
        Will sing melodies  
Numbing you on too much –  
    Novocain.

There's something about this place.  
As though it's a lost satellite, floating on,  
Uncertainty, insanity, its only ruling law.

You say you want to see LA,  
But be warned,  
Here lives

The men,  
Who whisper,  
In love,

“For you I can hide a body,  
For you I will do it all.”

*Kyle Walsh*  
"Horns"

Horns  
in a ragged blare, scratchy,  
atonal, drums on low  
tom toms rolling, falling out of their rhythms,  
inflationary lilt of the bass, distortion  
maniacal, instinctive rush:

horns  
writhing out, music  
a stilllife of motion:

this is the way her song seeped in,  
the daily cries cascading in,  
yet seeming to rumble, redouble away,  
not immune to neverending:  
a lip lipped with iridium,  
a dance of smutty flags atop metallic tongues,  
black bile at the bottom of the coffee cup.

I went to see the oracle—  
the oracle damned me.

She had a jigsaw face,  
hair a menagerie of parrots,  
pilfered volcanics in her outstretched hands,  
she was the nth version of she.

She re-alkemized herself,  
dove elliptical  
into gulleys, aroused the indifinities—  
climbing upon tree limbs

I tried the chiseled word—  
She sang without words.

Unsang me,  
this space that cannot be corralled—  
under a ceiling infested with eye-gnomes,  
discolorations, contorted faces,

lilith improvised my dreams,  
yet with a rhythmic regularity and dance,  
each night desire pressed into the barrels . . .

each day, mirages congealed in  
a solitary sunburnt land  
(that is my stomach, that is my mind).

I sing I? Preposterous!  
But if I don't have the words to explain myself,  
when the time comes I will lead myself to the firing squad.

Creatrix, how do I scratch out these erratic ecstasies?  
No fat on my bones to keep in warmth,  
I let this cold desert wind pierce my skin  
until this body grown thin against the elements becomes a  
sieve.

And before I sift away like a tower  
of sand (sand that is pulverized bone),

coil me up inside of this leg, this thigh

the days have pooled into a sadness conjured from blank skies

re-twine the collapsed valves of this heart

every opening is a divide

I hold myself

in

*Dimitri Reyes*

"i can Trump my own diary entry"

Dear diary,

The prez of half – a – country called me  
this morning (no surprise)  
giving me my *millions* of thank you's  
for saving the world (yet again)  
with my red-headed greatness.

I told her I'll have a whole country  
and I love Super Mario, we should talk Nintendo!  
I was no italian plumber but I can create "coin" faster  
than any commie slipping down a pipe or messing around  
on Rainbow Road. Still, those leppie looking gays are good income.

Do you like when I use the word "coin?"  
*Blacks and hispanics*  
*are some of the greatest people I ever met.*  
They work cheap.  
I paid Consuela to hang up my phone call.

*Trust me—*  
*I'mgonnabuildwall*  
and turn America on its head.  
Our jobs will be kept from moving to Cancun  
because that county is my timeshare (and I'm not sharing!)

*I. Am. Going. To. Make. America. Great. Again.*  
The DOW is loving me! And because of that  
I'll talk to whoever I want! Every soft browed,  
blue eyed, bear riding, bare chested president,  
every tight piece of Taiwanese spring roll  
who owns half – a – country—

I'm the real boss dammit! And  
I'll have Springsteen renamed  
when Chris Christie sucks  
my toes (and likes it!)  
and if you don't like it diary,  
Then YOU'RE FIRED too!

~~Lovingly yours,~~

~~Mr. Sexy,~~

~~Lovingly yours,~~

~~Your President Elect,~~

Lovingly yours,

THE BOSS,

Donald J. Trump

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***Dimitri Reyes***

**"Smoke n' Mirrors"**

*It's the day after November 9th, 2016*

The air is thick with disgusting

our colored kids are crying

to their parents who are crying

to their kids who are crying

my neighbor started packing his *burro*

people booking one way tickets out

immigrants swimming their boats back

people who can't leave

the nation committed suicide on the east coast

(2:51 AM was 9 minutes before witching hour)

the stock market is a surging ocean

and we are lobsters boiling in a pot

(can't you hear them screaming?)

“pack your bags”

George Carlin turns over in his grave

mumbling something about

underestimating

stupid

people



in large groups.

Everyone is a rigged balloteer lost in the ballot count

blue campaign t-shirts are on

discount

(you too,)

you second class

you's everybody that used ol' Americana dread

commies are all over craigslist now.

the new president

(the waiting)

it's over

the people have their skincaught  
in the country's zipper  
where our organs are hemmed into his seam  
but most of us don't fit his  
tailoring  
it never was) about us  
itwasnotabout him  
itwasnotabout her  
itwasnotabout the other 7 we didn't know  
(it wasn't about us

It was the friendly likenesses  
of  
the weeping laughter  
the guffawed sobbing  
that eats together at the same parties  
where red and blue make the same DNA

*Tim Kahl*  
"Belly Dancing Channel"

bariatric surgery for  
Wal-Mart cashier leads to  
work at dirt track gift shop

dogs on battlefield  
operate surgical robot  
with wagging tail  
task force of terriers  
mends bonds between  
soldiers and organ donors

senator's secret son  
forgets jester's hat  
still manages to  
get through rite of passage

giant goldfish in lake  
decides to stop bullying victims  
anti-social minnows reflect on  
their history as tasty morsel

belly dancing channel  
taken off air  
in favor of gynecologist's  
videotaped sessions

mammograms of hackers  
upset shareholders  
for security guard startup  
reluctant to interact  
with Twitterverse

*Cleo Rohn*

"Because You Worried"

For all the strange indigo of dusk,  
for all the dust kicked up  
by street sweepers in the rust  
and gravel of morning,

for every midnight glow that turned  
as scarlet and golden as yearning,  
for the sunrises that caught us red-handed,  
for the drives we took together,

and all the ones I took alone  
lining circles around the lumberyard  
with *La Cienega* in my ears and  
street light bulbs spinning out in my eyes

like river ripples, for all the time we spent squinting  
over the crumpled maps of our feelings,  
know that this is not quite sadness,  
not in that burned and blackened sense,

not like in the past, when the charring  
fingers of that feeling held me  
and I wove hammocks between them  
to hide my face from the sun,

but although it is not sadness it still presses  
my lungs against my spine, it still blurs  
my vision on the highway, it still dances  
in the black and white diner tiles

of my kitchen floor,  
and it is still no easy task  
to bottle and cork this,

and it is still no easy task

to place it in the corner of my cupboard  
and watch the dust settle in.

*Elijah Tubbs*  
"Sandalwood"

The sea foams turquoise  
A gull's screech staggers softly  
I long for salt breath

It escapes like breath  
Water sound on my eardrum  
Tall grass in high tide

A woman carries  
a basket on her shoulder  
She says she loves me

I look up at sun  
A cuckoo of birds leaves me  
Oh oh oh sweet birds

Fever dreams of peaches  
sweet on a sandalwood bough  
Peaches tomorrow

Wind's kiss on my mouth  
reminds me where my face stops  
Or is it begins?

A baby kisses  
its mother's breast like breathing  
in and out in and out again

The woman who holds  
the basket fucks me real good  
I cry out Huzzah!

I peel the bark slow

to get the aroma right  
My sandalwood tree

Everything perfect  
happens underneath here in  
sandalwood tree shade



# *SHORT FICTION*



# "MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT"

*By SondriaWRITES*

“...and all you dudes out there that don’t eat pussy: stop callin’ my phone! I mean it, Los Angeles. I do Pilates three times a week to keep the insides of my thighs tight and smooth. You ain’t *never* seen a bitch with thighs this velvety smooth. I get a Brazilian wax every two weeks. I douche—hell—my cootie pie is everything but *shellacked*. From time to time I expect somebody to get on down there and take a gander or two. Shit, take the full tour; check out the décor—I digress. This is Miss Margo and you’re listening to *Middle of the Night with Margo*. Stay right there because I’ll be right back with the dirty-dirty’s own: Big Brady.”

Margo hit a button, waited for the red light to go out, and removed her headset. She took a Newport from her bag and placed it between full, shiny lips completely conscious of her single-person

audience. Once she lit the white stick, Margo put on a short, leather jacket and approached her guest.

“You wanna go outside and have a smoke?” The voice she spoke in was the same one that got her the *Middle of the Night* gig. She headed to the station’s balcony confident that the rapper was in tow.

Once outside she let the cool air and nicotine high seduce her. The rapper however, was failing miserably.

“Shawty you so thick. Girl, you makin’ ya boy homesick right now, I swear. Ya swagger say New York, but them some southern hips. I’m sayin’ though, why don’t you let me break you off right. I know your man ain’t doin’ it.” He went on like this for four, long minutes. Margo flicked her cigarette over the balcony and grabbed Big Brady by the dick and kissed him hard.

“Back to work,” she said and strolled back inside. She removed her jacket, sat in her chair and put her headset back on.

“Hey L.A.! This is that bitch Margo and I’m back with Big Brady. Say what’s up to L.A., Big B!” The rapper struggled for a hot second putting his headset on.

“What’s up, Cali, it’s ya boy Big Brady, reppin’ that Die for Dollars, you already knowin.’ What’s really good?”

After the radio show Margo took Big Brady to a nightclub downtown. Once he realized she wasn’t a groupie, he actually took some time fucking her decently before she left him exhausted in the penthouse suite he’d tried to distract and impress her with.

Times like these Margo wished she had a good, female friend she could call and squeal into the receiver with. Well, that’s how she would’ve felt five years ago, right now, she just wanted to meet Gates for brunch and sip too many mimosas under the pretense that she was having trouble deciding what to eat.

Margo had known Gates since high school and she thought that he probably had some sort of *Pretty in Pink* crush on her, but she didn’t have time to deal with that, so she drowned out his feelings

with witty banter, orange juice, and champagne.

“Big Brady, huh?” Gates said and scooped a piece of cantaloupe into his mouth. Juice drizzled down his mouth and he slurped and licked to catch it—momentarily confusing Margo’s loins. “Was he every bit as eloquent as he seems?”

“Very funny. You shouldn’t even be asking me that—you *should* have been listening, old man.” Margo grabbed her spoon from her napkin and outstretched her arm to scoop up some of Gates’ cantaloupe. He swatted her hand.

“If you’ll recall—madam—it was *you* who graduated before *me*.”

“Shhhh!” Margo hissed from behind her sunglasses and reached, this time successfully, for a piece of cantaloupe.

When Margo elongated her tongue to catch some dribbling juice, Gates leaned in to make the move she’d dreaded since her senior year of college. Right now, though, she appreciated it. Crooked Brady hadn’t kissed her once the night before; he’d concentrated on trying to give her a hickey—it was then that she remembered having read something about a huge bash at the 40/40 in honor of his twenty-first birthday. Gates, however, nearly ten years Brady’s senior, knew all about lips and tongues and chins and juice. Just when he was about to show her what he knew of teeth, she pushed her chair back from the table.

“What was that?” Margo said adjusting her glasses and gulping the last of her current mimosa.

“That was a kiss.” Gates’ cool demeanor as he dabbed the corners of his mouth with the cloth napkin confused Margo’s loins again and she leaned across the table.

She glided on the elliptical with bipolarized emotions, elation being the more prominent of the two. She had a lightness coursing through her that she hadn’t felt since she saw Pharrell Williams, in-person, at fashion week. Butterflies, she supposed. The other feeling was knotted at the base of her stomach and she chose to ignore it by doing an

extra forty minutes on the machine, ensuring her exhaustion upon exiting the gym.

On the drive home she thought about her burning legs and took pride in her hard work. Any thoughts about fucking Gates in the restroom of their favorite restaurant were drowned out by turning the car radio up a couple of dials. Margo lay in her bed freshly showered and mumbled “fucking mimosas” before drifting into slumber.

“Okay ya’ll, tonight it’s time for you to give *me* some advice. Cutty Buddies and Friends with Benefits. The idea behind it seems ingenious: physical monogamy coupled with emotional promiscuity. But what happens if you get some cutty from a lifelong buddy? Is that foul play? Are you guys automatically going together because of the emotional history? Talk to me, City of Angels. Manic Margo needs your help.” Margo lit a cigarette and waited for the phones to start lighting up. She was two inhales in when they did. Her wide range of listeners gave her advice from opposite ends of the spectrum. She *shouldn’t* fuck a friend if all she wanted was sex. She *should* fuck a friend because it will be passionate and the relationship will be meaningful. Was Margo ready for a meaningful relationship? She was only twenty—ugh—something.

She didn’t know what she wanted, all she knew was—then her cell phone buzzed. “...I mean, me and my wife have been together for almost thirty years, and we started off as prom dates, Margo. Don’t let fear have you missin’ out on your soulmate.”

“Thank you Dominic, I appreciate that. And thank you Los Angeles for helping me out and keeping me up. You’ve been listening to Middle of the Night with Margo, as if you didn’t already know. Goodnight, L.A.” Margo checked her cell phone—it was a message from Big Brady: *I’ll be your cutty buddy baby*. She shut the phone off and headed home.

The next week Margo skipped brunch and opted to go get some

extra gym time in. She'd been on the elliptical seventeen minutes when her phone rang. Gates. She watched it in a panic—should she pick up or shouldn't she? Who did he think he was anyway? She missed one lousy brunch in what, eight years? She didn't owe him anything. But she didn't text or call to let him know either. She could have been in an accident for all he knew. She could have at least text him. She started to answer and the phone stopped ringing. Missed call. Whatever.

“Probably wasn't that important,” Margo looked to the left and was unnoticeably startled by the bright white of the teeth smiling at her.

“That's a pretty pompous assumption to make.” The stranger was too fine and she required a little distraction from all this Gates business.

“Well pardon me. It wasn't my intention to be pompous.” The chocolate man's gaze never left Margo's smooth complexion, her shapely body, or her gorgeous face.

“Now you're making fun of me? Not too good with first impressions, are you?” She was going to devour him.

Margo felt better on her drive home. Who could have thought that standing sex, in the gym shower, with a stranger, could be so satisfying? Gates had tried several times to reach her but she couldn't be bothered right then; her life was on the up and up and she needed to take that energy to the studio later on. Instead, she called the only other person she really had to call.

“Hey Simone.”

“Are you pregnant?!”

“Wow.”

“Sorry baby. Your auntie's not senile. I dreamt of fish last night and I already called all of your cousins. I didn't even consider you.”

“Well, you should keep running with that feeling. I'm not the pregnant type, Simone.”

“You a woman ain't you?”

“Do I have to answer that?”

“Oh, so your tubes are tied.”

“No.”

“You celibate all of a sudden?”

“Now you know me better than that.”

“Then you’re the type, honey.”

After attempting to convince her aunt of all the reasons she could have been dreaming of fish besides her own prenatal condition, Margo lay down for a nap. However, she received a text that demanded her immediate attention. It was from Gates:

“Are we ever going to talk about what happened?”

“Yes,” she typed and then dozed off.

Gates knew Margo well. Probably better than she thought he did. After receiving her response to his text he decided not to bug her about it. If he did, she would do one of two things: explode or disappear. He had seen it happen with other men. She was always very clear about what she wanted and what she wanted was sex. Still, the men she involved herself with had it in their minds that once they’d rocked her world, she’d want to husband them. Or at least go on a second (or in some cases a first) date. Each one had been wrong.

She was a captivating woman. Physically, she was unmatched by any one he’d ever seen. He actually laughed at himself while thinking of her because she has all of the things most black women he knew tried to tie down, tuck in, or press straight. Not Margo. She wore no makeup. In fact, she fought against the need for it, drinking water in excess, denying anything carbonated or more sugary than necessary, regularly changing her pillowcases. She wore her hair naturally and it cascaded over her shoulders in thick curls. She was as black as the night sky, and as free too. When she spoke it washed over his entire being, and made him want to kiss her to keep from dropping to his knees. He knew now—what had made man after man call her repeatedly despite what it must’ve done to



their pride. The moment he received her text he felt that his entire manhood depended on whether or not he could make her his bride.

“Well hello, Los Angeles! It is the *Middle of the Night* and I am Margo. I’m in a slow jam kind of mood tonight. I’m feelin’ sexy. Ya’ll ever have a night like that? Well pour yourself some wine, I already got mines, and let’s let Maxwell tell us about his ‘Bad Habits.’” Margo pressed the button and removed the earphones once the red light was extinguished. Her head was buzzing.

From the gym to this Gates situation to the spliff she’d smoked on the way to the studio—something had her head swimming. She decided it was the weed and walked to the balcony with a lit cigarette between her fingers. The city was gorgeous during this time of night. Black and free. She leaned over the balcony and imagined flying...

The next morning Margo was sick. She’d been spewing all morning, but she decided to meet Gates for brunch anyway. She might not have been able to eat, but she wasn’t fucking around with any mimosas either.

“Hey kiddo. You look terrible.” Gates thought she looked better than any woman in the room but he wanted to assure her that nothing had changed between them...regardless of how much had.

“Thanks a lot. I’ve been throwing up too, in case you were wondering.” Margo smiled her normal smile and sat in her normal seat, however abnormal she felt. They dined and Gates drank, per usual. Witty banter distracted Margo from her wobbly stomach and allowed Gates to stare at her eyes, lips, cheekbones, flailing hands without interruption. They were back on track, but headed in a new direction. Each of them felt it. Each of them got louder and funnier trying to ignore it. ♦

# "THE TREES"

*By Alice Ash*

**"You think that it will never** happen to you," said the television, "but it may well. Divorce affects up to 70% of couples and your marriage could be next."

I span on my heel and pointed at the television.

"Never!" I said, "Did you hear that, Honey-Bea? 70% divorce rate!"

Beatrice couldn't hear me; she was looking for Jason's lunchbox while Jason banged his little shoe on the floor.

I considered my son for a moment and then sat down on the balding sofa.

"With our new formula of sheen-tastic dye FOR MEN, you can keep yourself looking good."

A disembodied spinning head, covered in glossy chestnut hair, appeared on the screen.

“Uh-huh,” I said.

“Bye,” shouted my wife from somewhere near the backdoor.

“Goodbye Honey-Bea,” I replied, my eyes fixed on the spinning head.

\*

I asked Miranda Jones what she thought about marriage in the cafeteria. We were eating white macaroni cheese and Miranda was wearing a blue blouse, made from incredibly transparent material.

Miranda’s lips are so plump that the bottom one actually droops down a little. I’ve jokingly asked myself before; is that lip about to fall off of her face? She sat and painted the lips pink after she had eaten a few tubes of macaroni and pushed the plate away; and she kept rubbing them together, the lips, when she was thinking about what to say.

“You should try it some time,” I said, drowsily.

“Yeah, okay Richard, I’ll just try marriage,” she said, laughing, “what, do I have lipstick on my teeth or something?”

“No,” I said, and I blinked.

“Your marriage in trouble, Rich?”

\*

There is a company in Milton Keynes called Trees for Love. This company take the two of your initials, for example, in our case, R.Y and B.Y and make a professional mould type thing, which they then stamp into a tree. The whole scenario is supposed to imitate the kind of thing you would do as a teenager, with your sweetheart on a summer evening, maybe after a dance or something similar.

When Trees for Love have marked the tree, they take a photo and send it right to your home address, and if you ever happen to be in the area you can go and check it out and it will most probably still be there, (assuming there haven’t been any property developments on the location).

For our tenth wedding anniversary I made an order and, as

luck would have it, the picture arrived on the morning Bea's family turned up, her parents and brothers, with their kids and a huge gift and all that. Tony and I knuckle punched, like we do, and then I got him a beer, and we sat down while Bea put all the juice and the sandwiches and everything on the table and took one of the kids upstairs to the toilet and then came back down smiling, with the kid on her hip. Bea had a bit of toilet paper stuck to the back of her skirt, so I went to pick it off, but she swerved my hand and walked away to put the kid in front of the television, with the paper still stuck there.

I thought about asking Tony the same question that I had asked Miranda Jones in cafeteria, but it was awkward because I've always kind of wanted to impress Tony, being that he knows a lot about sport and wrestling and that he is my wife's father. So I just talked to him about football and what was happening to his lawn that year and, later on, when it came around to being time for gifts, I could see that Tony was made-up when Bea unwrapped the picture, which Trees for Love had framed with a really nice pearly border, and I was glad that I hadn't asked him.

I didn't need to ask him, I already knew all about marriage.

Bea was staring at the picture for ages, while everyone crowded round to see, and I guessed that she didn't want to look up 'cause there were tears in her eyes. So I took a couple of minutes to explain to Tony about what a great idea Trees for Love is and how there were thousands of trees, and ours was one of them, but then Beatrice looked at me coldly and asked me why I hadn't just carved the inscription onto the oak at the bottom of the garden myself.

I spluttered a little and waited for Bea to laugh but she didn't, she just kept on staring at me and I looked at Tony and said, "But..." and Tony just shrugged and said, "Let's eat."

\*

My wife was wearing a sarong when she told me that she wanted to join a pottery class.

I said, "Okay now, what's going on Honey-Bea? Is something wrong?"

She just shouted, “NO!” and I went to work.

\*

In the summer, just after Jason finished his exams, I drove from my home in Kent to Milton Keynes.

I wanted to see the tree.

The traffic was bad and I took a break at a service station on the way, to get coffee mainly, and then to smoke three cigarettes when I didn’t really feel like driving off again.

A man in a cowboy hat stopped to use the cash machine next to where I loitered, scuffing my shoes against the curb. The cowboy looked at me and I smiled awkwardly, the way men smile at each other: reserved. But after the smile, he kept on looking at me and I couldn’t think of anything to say until I said, “Howdy,” and wished I hadn’t.

The cowboy observed me calmly and my heart beat very hard, once.

“Howdy,” he said.

The cowboy’s voice was buried in a thick German accent and his face was free of lines, almost absurdly expressionless, even with the smile. He waited for me to say something else but I just looked back at him.

“Did you need something?” he said.

“Yes,” I said, surprising myself, what did I need? “I mean,” I was panicked, “do you have a lighter?”

“Ya, I have a match,” he said.

He looked for the matches in his jeans while I took another cigarette out of my pack.

“We are having our holidays,” he said, handing me a fold of matches from somewhere called Hotel Amour, and pointing across the pumps to where a Landrover rocked with the motion of children bouncing in the backseat. The German cowboy’s blonde wife was leaning on the steering wheel, her face to the children, fingers splayed out in animation, just like stars. The back door was open slightly and the lean foot of a teenage girl was cooling on the step.

She was probably letting some of the noise out of the car, like you would let air out of a balloon.

“Great,” I said and I lit my cigarette. The matches had pink heads, like roses.

The cowboy pulled a thick wedge of notes out of the cash machine and turned to me, “Something else?” he said.

“What do you think about marriage?” I asked quickly.

The German was quiet and his eyes dropped away from mine, like he was thinking, but then he just shrugged.

“Don’t worry about it, friend,” he said and he clapped his hand onto my shoulder twice.

I held out his rose matches.

“Keep them,” said the German cowboy.

Then he walked away.

\*

It wasn’t like a normal forest at all because the trees were planted at the exact same distance from each other, and there was no grass or flowers or even dirt in between, just a short wooden guard around the bottom of each one. When I got further in, I saw that people had tied trinkets around the smooth bark and written little messages, as though the trees were graves or memorials. I didn’t like it much really, but I told myself that when I saw our tree, it would be different from the rest; that it would probably explain something, there was going to be a clue.

The trees were neatly initialed, each one roughly the same height and certainly the same kind (were they elm trees?) Each way I looked the neat lines disappeared to a point where I knew more trees stood, but I couldn’t find a logic to the way the trees were marked; the initials would jump from A.A, B.A, A.A, B.C to W.I., L.I, and the sun went down while I fumbled my way down through the wooden army, pulling gloom out behind me until I saw it, R.Y, B.Y.

The letters were printed perfectly and I stared at them for a long time, hoping they would tell me something in the symmetry of

their curves, the smooth loops and lines. I'll tell Beatrice, I thought; I'll call her and tell her that I could never have made the letters so neat with my penknife. But after that, R.Y, B.Y. said nothing to me; this tree was just like all of the other trees, looming identically.

I sighed and ran my hand through my hair; the greys were starting to show now, not in silver streaks, but standing up like wire all over my head. There were stars twinkling at me calmly and a plane flew over the plot and over Milton Keynes and over, over, over, on and on. I thought about the German and his family on their holidays, I wondered where they were going and what there might be doing, right at that moment. The yard was getting darker still and, as a reflex, I reached into my pocket for a comforting cigarette. Hotel Amour.

I scratched a match back and forth across the grain and when the flame burst, the trees sprung up around me.

"This is Richard and Beatrice's tree," I said to myself, or to the tree, maybe to all of the trees and then, without really knowing why, I stretched out my arms as far as I could, touching two trees, four strangers, and, feeling the cool skin of these new friends, I closed my eyes to the sky.

"What do you think about marriage?" I whispered to the darkness, and before I could hear the answer, I ran quickly through the jumping shadows of the trees. ♦

## "FAUX FABLE: GOING PRIMITIVE"

*By William C. Blome*

**Flexing her biceps again and again** until she actually grew a tad woozy from doing so, Pearl nevertheless kept feeling her left arm with her right fingers (and vice versa, of course) over and over, until one day, she skipped through her living room and on into the powder room with its mirror and visual confirmation that if she craved to bulk up and grow strong enough to truly go Cro-Magnon, then she was going to have to become sufficiently buff to be able to club her lover on his fedora-wearing head so he'd drop like a deflated judy-doll, and it would then be okay for Pearl to lose her thick, thick club of oak and drag her lover to the daybed in her duplex— well,



in order for Pearl to accomplish all that, she was going to have to polish off even more than her standard fare of four nice bowls of steel-cut oatmeal every morning, an overstuffed hero sandwich near noon, and a sixteen-ounce rare porterhouse with Jujubes come dinnertime.

Wisely, she didn't fail to see she'd also have to latch on to some brand new supporting hobbies, stuff like practicing the hammer throw in a midnight-empty football field nearby; or becoming expert in raising and harvesting beets, and then facile in distilling, aging, and herself consuming calorie-packed beet alcohol (this liquor stuff—naturally and understandably— within the tight confines of her own domicile); and additional muscle-and-mass-developing activities along these lines.

In perhaps her most challenging response of all, Pearl launched into changing certain of her attitudes. No more lightness of step and grace of movement: she began now to pound her feet down to meet the floorboards of her house or the crust of the earth outside, just like the rock-hard Neanderthal she was fast becoming. She also spat at many things she didn't care zip about, and took a dump wherever she wanted; she never touched a razor anymore.

As for her lover, this Mr. Fedora, his head in time did meet Pearl's re-found and hefty oaken weapon, and he was then dutifully dragged along the sidewalk and pulled up her foyer steps and into the place he'd now have to call home. Surprisingly however, he rather quickly adapted to his new surroundings, and came in time to lose a lot of language and one ton of oral nuance. He took to sketching and painting on the walls and continually sewing together pieces of clothing and fabric household items of every kind into one humongous counterpane, under which he'd scamper and hide whenever the front door or the back door was opened to the world outside.

**Moral:** *Just a glimpse of what it can mean to be at a permanent loss for words or grace.*



# ***ESSAY/CRITIQUE***



# "The Pornography of Trump"

*By Deborah J. Cohan*

The week before the election, I was teaching about domestic violence and sexual assault in my Introduction to Sociology class. I talked about the cultural discourse that circulates around these issues, and to illuminate my points, I brought in cartoons from *Hustler Magazine* that I projected onto the screen. One cartoon made a mockery of incest; another cartoon made fun of rape. For example, one cartoon featured a young woman performing oral sex on a much older man and the caption reads: "Hell no Cindy Lou. I can't let you drop out of school and turn pro. What kind of father would that make me?!" And another cartoon featuring a man with his penis out of his pants with ejaculate dripping on him and on women falling into a jury box has a caption that reads, "So, ladies of the jury, would you say my client viciously raped you, or gave you the most magnificent fuck of your life that you'll cherish till the day you die?"

We discussed in class that the intended audience for *Hustler* and many other online outlets for pornography is largely white, working class, straight men. Creators of *Hustler* specifically attempt to appeal to other dimensions of identity often associated with this audience, namely politically conservative, anti-immigration, racist, lacking cultural capital, and very pro-gun; and, these images prey on these men's perceptions of being disenfranchised, especially when women, people of color and those of immigrant status attain even a modicum of power.

As I stood there teaching about the effects of this pornographic imagination and reality, it came to me that the very same audience to which *Hustler* is marketed is also the very same audience to which Donald Trump holds the most appeal. I left class stunned by

this insight I had been able to forge through teaching, that Trump is pornographic.

And, here's why:

- **“I’ll know it when I see it.”** This comment about pornographic material dates back to the sixties to determine the obscenity standard. In the summer of 2015, the idea of Trump becoming president was dismissed as a joke and almost as a crazy dare, as in “Whatever, I’ll believe it when I see it.” Now that he is president-elect, each day brings with it news that challenges the American public. Resisters are suggesting eerie and painful parallels to the Holocaust while others claim we just have to “get over it,” “wait and see” or remember that “it can’t be that bad, remember, after all, this is America.”
- **Come on; give it a chance.** Proponents, buyers, and users of pornography claim that it is not a bad thing, that attempts to resist it mean that people, typically women, need to be less uptight, need to loosen up, and to try something new and kinky to shake things up a bit. Those who want no part of a colonized sexuality like that insist that pornography is the antithesis of creative, sensuous sexuality, and that pornography portrays a version of sex that is fetishized, McDonaldised, cheapened, unhealthy, degrading, and violent. Trump supporters, and even those who did not vote for him and are impatient with the collective grief and outrage that is occurring with hashtags such as #notmypresident or #nevermypresident suggest that people just need to get on with it, get over it, give the guy a chance, pray for him to do well, and respect the presidency. But, what are we upholding? What are we maintaining as sacred?
- **You’re making a big deal of it.** It’s not that bad. It doesn’t cause actual harm. Or, how bad does it have to get? Do we want to give porn, and especially hardcore porn, a chance? Hardcore

porn relies on the most racist, woman-hating, and violent imagery to market sex. In that configuration, domination and pain are fully eroticized. Women are chained, gagged, dragged, urinated on, defecated on, beaten, hung, and raped. Women featured in pornography are also participating in it less than freely, typically doing it because of a lack of other viable options, economic coercion and prior history of sexual violence. So what does it mean, in a so-called free society, that some people are getting off, some are victimized, some are profiting and some who are promised goods and services are thoroughly deprived?

- **This is not normal.** Or, is it, “welcome to the new normal.” Robert Jensen (1), a longtime researcher, writer, professor and activist, who has published and spoken widely about the effects of pornography, suggests that there are two parallel trends in pornography. One trend is that it is more mainstream and normalized than ever before such that many popular magazines feature advertisements that would have at one time been regarded as pornographic. The other trend is pornography has gotten increasingly misogynist, racist, and violent. The more mainstream it is, the more brutal, degrading and dehumanizing it appears. That surely sounds familiar in this current political climate; the more Trump has mobilized extreme and intense hatred, the more normalized and relentless that hatred has become. He gave more ammunition to people who already were in lock and load mode.
- **We can’t stop it. It’s about free speech.** But, whose speech is valued in pornography? Whose right to expression is prioritized? Moreover, whose speech is valued in this post-election moment? Whose expression is prioritized in this post-election moment? We’re reminded of Trump’s attempt to silence the actors in the play *Hamilton* and how he wanted to force them to apologize for speaking out against hateful oppression. Who is free and who is not in these arrangements? Freedom is linked

to power, and speech and rights are also linked to power. When Trump speaks of building walls, constructing registries, grabbing women by their pussies, naming to his cabinet bigots, misogynists and others who want to render invisible the pain of whole groups of people, then historically marginalized groups are further silenced.

- **It's just fantasy. No one will truly act this out.** Experts who study the effects of media images and pornography have long urged us to see that there is correlation, if not causation, between pornography and sexually violent attitudes and behaviors. The images may just seem like fantasy but when people buy and use them to get sexual pleasure, they often take this sense of being transported into a “dreamworld” as media critic Sut Jhally calls it, and expect that when back in the real world, women will behave similarly, always ready, willing and able to have sex at the whim of any man.
- **Pornography feeds off of the connections between various forms of oppression such as sexism, racism, xenophobia, etc.** The sociologist, Patricia Hill Collins, says that pornography featuring black women typically showcases them in racially exaggerated ways, as the exotic primitive, in chains, or amidst some relic of slavery. Furthermore, cartoons in Hustler feature military men talking about getting “Islamic booty” and other cartoons play on and prey on men’s fears of job loss and economic virility and prowess and readily blame this on anyone who is not a white American. For example, one cartoon features a picture of a male executive receiving oral sex from a woman, presumably his secretary, and he says: “This bitch is costing me a damn fortune. I could probably get it done cheaper in China” and then the caption says, “Another good-paying job about to be shipped overseas?” There’s also the cartoon of the woman at the grocery store not having enough money to purchase everything in her



cart at the cash register and so she has to stoop down to give the manager oral sex with a caption that reads, “Ask about our tough economy discount.” In pornography, power is constructed as a zero-sum game. If women, people in and from other countries, people of color, etc. have any amount of power, then men creating, buying and using pornography capitalize on their own perception of a loss of power and use sexual conquest and dominion and submission as a way to play that out.

- **Pornography is not an aberration but rather a reflection of the culture.** According to Jensen\*, “Pornography as a mirror shows us how men see women. Not all men, of course—but the ways in which many men who accept the conventional conception of masculinity see women.” In much the same way, I would argue that Trump, too, is not an aberration but rather a mirror into the culture; his tactics and strategies have revealed what has been simmering below the surface. His fear-mongering has given a permission slip to those who have twisted various forms of systemic oppression, who see themselves as victims in those distorted visions, and who want to viciously express their rage. Trump as a mirror shows us how whites see people of color, how right-wing Christians see Jews, how some of America sees Muslims, and how a culture sees women when they aspire to the highest office in the land. Trump as a mirror shows us that inexperienced, straight, rich, white, Christian men can get jobs over qualified women who have worked in the field for decades. Trump as a mirror also shows us how a media-saturated, reality TV show, degradation-as-entertainment style culture can take hold.
- **Pornography provides short-term pleasure and long-term problems.** Men who regularly rely on pornography tend to, over time, have unrealistic views of women and sexuality, often see their partners in more objectifying ways, and have issues with

erections, orgasms and intimacy. When men encounter these problems in the real world with real women, they are left with two dominant emotions—to suck it up or to be angry, and then usually that anger is directed at the woman they are with. In the end, I doubt this is the world most men want to live in either.

I will never forget counseling a violent man in a battering intervention program who shared with the group that the only way he could achieve orgasm was to put images from pornography around his partner, on the bed, the walls and floor. Some years later, I came across an advertisement for BMW featuring a man on top of a woman in bed with a picture of a BMW covering her face that said, “The ultimate attraction.” The ad depicted the woman as faceless, disembodied, emotionless, and silent and suggesting that this is the ultimate attraction. Pornography does the same thing as that ad.

In the middle of the night on November 9th, the Trump victory was like a final wild orgasm for his supporters. He has provided a large number of people some short-term pleasure, giving them a sense of jingoistic victory, providing them a way to actualize their own brazen sense of entitlement.

A few weeks before the election I was at my favorite cafe as they were closing, talking with my friend who is the owner (she is white) and some of her employees. The black men who had been cooking in the kitchen came out and talked about being for Trump. The owner smiled and tried to plead with them, “But, how? You’re black.” I simply said to them, “You may be rooting for Trump, but he’s not rooting for you.” Trump successfully got many people to vote against their own interests, histories, and lives. This is also true of Jews who voted for Trump, some of whom chose to protect financial assets rather than worry about rampant and pernicious anti-Semitism, the sort that likely shaped and destroyed their own family’s lineage.

With Trump, like with pornography, any gains are fleeting and fragile, momentary and minuscule, short-lived and seductive.

But, can we sustain the human losses from each? Probably not. Not by a long shot. Some years ago, I attended a lecture given by Robert Jensen in which he said, “Pornography is what the end of the world looks like.” With each new cabinet pick, with each raging, cruel, infantile tweet, and with the overwhelming violence that has emerged in less than a month by people emboldened by Trump’s message, critics of Trump are rightfully worried about the very same thing.



(1) Jensen, Robert. 2007. *Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.



## ***FEATURED INTERVIEW***



# ***WHO IS LUKA FISHER?***

**A CURATED CONVERSATION  
WITH THE  
L.A.  
BASED  
ARTIST**

*By*  
**Anna Ureña**

*Luka Fisher* has been an unofficial patron of the arts for *DRYLAND* since its inception in 2015. I don't know how she heard about us back then but I liked the work she sent us and published her short films and multimedia pieces. After that, we were showcasing photographers, filmmakers, performance artists, and poets like Genevieve Munroe, Kayla Tange, Matthew Kaundart, Chelsea Bayouth, Leila Jarma, and Mike Leisz---artists who were all tracing back to Luka Fisher. After a non-investigation into who she was (I don't lurk, I'm oldschool like that), it was clear that this would one day require a meet up.

In 2016, we made plans to meet at a MRK show at Honey Trap, a DIY art/music space in DTLA...and we kind of almost did meet. I showed up and looked around for Luka but she was nowhere to be seen. I texted her "I'm here. Where are you?" to which I received no reply. After the bands played, they rolled out a body on a table completely wound in plastic wrap like a cocoon. I didn't know this was



in store for the night since I never saw the event flyer but I was curious. Throughout the performance I wasn't sure whose body I was watching being put under torturous circumstances (but I did keep suspecting it was Luka's). The face was distorted by how tight the plastic was gripped around the head and the head had bright red lipstick and silver eye shadow, shimmery like a koi fish with a gaping mouth under the track lights. And then when the pale-skinned body was freed from the plastic encasing, and emerged, bloody and light-headed, everyone involved quietly went on to a back room. It was then when I came to my fine (inebriated) conclusion that it indeed was Luka Fisher who was tied up (and thus could not text back). Some friends were waiting to leave so I came up to her, quickly introduced myself and then shook her hand all professional-like and left the show.

When we actually actually met a few weeks ago, it was way less dramatic. She scooped me up from my house and we kicked it at her DTLA studio. We hung out a few times and had conversations about art, our origins, politics (*Fuck Trump*). This "interview" is a compact version of those conversations. Who's Luka Fisher? Peel back slowly... and see.

***Much of your art is collaborative. You've worked with other local artists like Peter Kalisch, Christopher Zeischegg, Leila Jarman, Matthew Kaundart, Kayla Tange, Daniel Crook, Tristene Roman and others. How does a collaboration start with you?***

Friendship.

***What has been your favorite art performance or collaboration? I can name the time I almost met you at the Honey Trap warehouse...that was pretty memorable.***

My collaborations are usually just the physical manifestation of an

ongoing dialogue with the other artist about our lives and aspirations. Collaboration then is a kind of cultural exchange where we learn each other's languages and explore new territories together. In this regard I think "Danny Wylde" was one of my most interesting collaborations because it combined literature, pornography, performance and visual art, with film and advertising. It was the kind of work that could have never been made without contributions and exchanges from Chris Zeischegg, Sheree Rose, Matthew Kaundart, and countless others. And the same could be said about some of the zines/actions that I curated like *The Golden Fool*, *The Holy Automatic* or my foray into hot sauce with Royce Burke and co.

***How do you decide if a piece is any good? Do you feel it out or just say fuck it or...?***

I think that it's hard to answer this question without sounding like a mystical douchebag. But fuck it here I go: I keep working until the piece tells me that it is done. When the work has taken on a life of its own and can exist without me then I send it off into the world.

***Speaking of style...you currently dress in a style you call "Art Mom." What inspires your looks?***

I've always wanted to look like a Congressman's eccentric wife or a ex-punk PTA mom that takes care of her art kids. So, my style then is really just a compromise between how I, in the abstract, imagine such people would dress and what I can find on sale at Goodwill.

***How do you feel about getting negative reviews?***

I figure any review is a positive review because someone was triggered enough by the work to either spend their unpaid time singing it's praises or hurling shit at it.

*Most of your work isn't exactly politically inclined. Has the fact that the USA is now running under the Trump administration changed your feelings about what to create? Or about the duty or responsibility of an artist to speak out? What are your thoughts on how artists play a part in resisting the new regime?*

It is true that much of my work is not overtly political within the context of contemporary American art, but I began making art and contemplating its function while I was studying in various parts of Russia. There, I watched the government crackdown on queer art and underground cultures under the pretext that these groups were creating dangerous and immoral "propaganda." I watched with horror as a country and culture that I deeply love descended again into authoritarianism and spectacle. There the government used prejudice, god and patriotism to consolidate its power.

Russia's crackdown on LGBTQ rights and civil society more broadly has been extremely disheartening to me because I had finally found a place I felt comfortable and they weren't comfortable with me. And it's awful to watch a culture that you love try and kill itself.

As I began making art in Russia, I was forced to contemplate what was at stake in my work. Ultimately, I decided that I had to risk being myself regardless of the consequences.

But there I was a foreigner and a student and so I was never fully affected by these policies because I could always leave and return to the United States where we didn't have these problems.

And so I did some translation work and tried to promote mutual understanding between our countries trusting that in time cooler heads would prevail.

Now, I realize that Russia was a time machine for what America is about to become under Donald Trump.

So, I have always seen my work as political in the sense that the personal is political and I am interested in both creating and promoting work that provides an alternative to our fear driven culture. And I am doing this because I believe that artists are cultural translators that can build bridges between disparate communities. By couching ideas in “spectacle,” “entertainment,” artists can create spaces for understanding and facilitate cooperation between communities in ways that can never be fully achieved through coercion. Art, broadly defined, can also create a safe space for communities that feel threatened by dominant cultures.

I hate that we as Americans live in a heteronormative hyper masculine culture that fears vulnerability, hates creative self-expression and tries to imprison us with fear and hatred and that our only acceptable outlets for our angst are based on consumption and conquest.

And I have been trying to counter these tendencies by creating and promoting alternative cultures. We cannot succeed with hate; we must present alternatives.

The political nature of my work has become more overt in the past year or so as I began to see free speech and creative self-expression come under attack by Facebook and Google. First, I witnessed Facebook increasingly crackdown on artists and activists with their prejudicial “community standards” which are based on mid-west, middlebrow values of what’s acceptable.

The effects of these standards are chilling and affect everything from how artists create and distribute work to who gets to speak and how. For example, people have had their images banned from Facebook for being “too fat,” for their disabilities, for remembering historic war crimes, or for just documenting indigenous cultures whose very

existence seems to upset Facebook's colonial values and targeted queer protestors. Yet, much of this behavior is ok if you are Kim Kardashian or some other pop celebrity. Like much of America, there are two sets of rules. One for those in power and another for those on the fringe.

And if this isn't enough to make you think that Facebook and its rules are serious then consider that the police officers that murdered Philando Castile are on trial for manslaughter because their actions were streamed on Facebook Live. Unfortunately, such videos are rarely seen by mass audiences because Facebook almost always collaborates with the police to suppress such footage.

Facebook has also been caught experimenting on its users.

Facebook and its ilk have become our town squares and we cannot allow them to radically curtail our right to a free and open discourse with those that we choose to associate with just because they are supposedly private entities.

Because only the government is legally obligated to protect our civil liberties, those that seek to repress and control us have been using corporations to wage a stealth culture war. This is why banks and money transfer services like Paypal often working in tandem with the Treasury Department have enacted policies that target "pornographers" and shut down their bank accounts, even when they are operating in full compliance with Federal and State laws.

And because these actions have been taken by "private entities", even when they are in all actuality collaborating with the Government, Civil Libertarians have largely kept their mouths shut.

I fear that this private war on our freedoms will only escalate. Now, back to Facebook and its repressive rules.

Facebook's "community standards" infantilizes its users and helps maintain a culture of sexual repression, fear and violence.

Facebook asserts that paintings of nudity are acceptable but nude photos cannot be tolerated. Rules like these become even more absurd when you consider that any painting that you see on Facebook is really just a photograph; or that artists like Andy Warhol, Carolee Scheneman, Yves Klein, Robert Rauschenberg, Steven Johnson Leyba, and countless others integrated photography and living bodies so thoroughly into their art that these distinctions are largely meaningless.

This is why much of my art explores nudity and other "taboo" topics in a mixed-media fashion. I am trying to start fights with Facebook over their understanding of what Art is, knowing that they will violate their own rules and ignore the last hundred years of developments within fine art which has blurred the lines between photography and painting; Art and Life.

I then document their punishments in the hopes of starting a larger conversation about how these social networks are affecting our cultural and political lives and what we must do to counter them.

I became further convinced that these organizations needed to be challenged after Google deleted fourteen years of novelist Dennis Cooper's work and refused for months to do anything to address this matter. If Google was willing to erase the artistic contributions of one of the most controversial and critically acclaimed writers alive today without any due process, then how can we trust them with our lives or our work?

Now in the aftermath of Trump's election it appears that Facebook and other sources of "big data" may have swung the election for Trump.

This why we need to take these platforms and the data that they are collecting on us seriously.

The artist Joseph Beuys talked about “Social Sculpture” and how every citizen is an artist that participates in the construction in the Total Artwork of their society, but this idea was always vague in part because it was hard to see all the invisible connections that tie us together. However, social networks make some of these connections visible. We can track, respond and coordinate actions in real time. Which is why I believe that we need to think about Social Network Sculpture and what that might look like in practice. In other words how can we be better, more engaged citizens on and offline? How can we use these tools to create a better world? Do we need to create better tools? Do we need to radically rethink the social contract we’ve struck with social networks?

Perhaps, we’ve gotten into this whole mess by accepting that the internet rendered everything free and that all this data that we were handing over wasn’t all that big of a deal because these companies were “progressive” and “cool” and anyway, society had moved past the culture wars. Except of course that was all bullshit.

These are questions that I am now grappling with and that I would like to help work on with folks much smarter than me. I have been particularly interested by the Electronic Frontier Foundation’s initiative to document and fight censorship on Social Media. If you have ever been the victim of Facebook’s repressive policies you can submit a report here: <https://onlinecensorship.org>

I believe that we have a responsibility to speak out and to resist the unconstitutional and immoral policies of the current administration. Not just as artists or citizens, but as human beings. We need to peacefully put an end to this national nightmare as soon as possible. This is not a right or left wing issue. This is an existential issue. We

cannot tolerate an administration that mistakes dick waving tough guy shenanigans for good governance.

However, I don't think that resistance is enough. We need to imagine the worlds that we want to live in and actively work to make them a reality. We need to imagine our way out of this mess. And this again is where artists can help, because art is creative manifestation.

I also believe that artists can use their shows to help activists organize and to raise money for charities and that we can donate our time and expertise to causes that need help. Daniel Crook and I are going to start giving away our art at concerts to those who donate to a list of charities we are currently drawing up.

If you (the reader) have any ideas about how I can help or what we can do collectively as artists and citizens please let me know. I am ready to get my hands dirty. ♦

**Luka's artwork and links to her projects can be viewed in the  
online version of this interview at *drylandlit.org*  
or on her website at *luka-fisher.com***

*Luka Fisher's art is featured on the cover of this issue.*





# CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

## POETS:

### ***Inalegwu Alifa***

Inalegwu Omapada Alifa's works have found home in some places: *Yellow Chair Review*, *Lunaris review*, *Parousia Magazine*, *Expound Magazine of Arts and Aesthetics*, *Visceral Brooklyn* and *GFT Series*.

### ***Cori Bratby-Rudd***

Cori Bratby-Rudd is a white bisexual gaybe poet and writer. She has just received her bachelor's degree in gender studies at UCLA.

### ***Paul Edward Costa***

Paul Edward Costa is a writer and spoken word performer who has published fiction, nonfiction, and poetry in publications such as *Timber Journal*, *Entropy*, *Alien Mouth*, and others. He has work forthcoming in *Literary Orphans Journal* and *Sein Und Werden*. He is also the founder of the ongoing Paul's Poetry Night spoken word series in the Greater Toronto Area. He is a high school English teacher with the Peel District School Board.

### ***Laurin DeChae***

Laurin DeChae is a MFA candidate for poetry at the University of New Orleans, where she acts as the associate editor for *Bayou Magazine*. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *Harpur Palate*, *burnt-district*, *Rust + Moth & Crack the Spine*, and elsewhere.

### ***Bryan Edenfield***

Bryan Edenfield was born in Arizona but has lived in Seattle since 2007. His work has most recently been published in *Plinth*, *Vanilla Sex Magazine*, *SUSAN: The Journal*, *the Ekphrastic Review*, and *Fourth & Sycamore*. He has a degree in philosophy and history and works at an art museum, so don't worry.

### ***Nikolai Garcia***

Nikolai Garcia was raised in South Central L.A. and currently lives in Compton. He was most recently published in the anthology, *The Coiled Serpent*, and in the latest issue of the literary magazine, *Huizache*. Also, he likes pizza.

### ***Henry Goldkamp***

Goldkamp lives in New Orleans with a spirit of gratitude. His work appears in many small journals and his art has been covered by *Time* and NPR. Google “henry goldkamp” for more.

### ***Howie Good***

Howie Good is the author of *Dangerous Acts Starring Unstable Elements*, winner of the 2015 Press Americana Prize. His latest book is *A Ghost Sings, a Door Opens* from Another New Calligraphy.

### ***John Grey***

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident. Recently published in *New Plains Review*, *Stillwater Review* and *Big Muddy Review* with work upcoming in *Louisiana Review*, *Columbia College Literary Review* and *Spoon River Poetry Review*.

### ***Angelique Gross***

Angelique is a poet and filmmaker based in Los Angeles. Her short films have been shown in several film festivals including, being nominated for “Best Picture” in the Los Angeles 48 Hour Film Festival.

### ***María Cristina Hall***

María Cristina Hall is a Mexican-American poet with a bachelor’s in creative writing and political science from Columbia University and a master’s in translation studies from Pompeu Fabra University. A Catalan and Spanish translator, she writes poetry and is currently a professor of English at the Tec de Monterrey in Mexico City. Some of her work can be found in *Apogee Journal*, *New Poetry*, *Leveler*, *The Fem*, and *Registro MX*.

***Korey Hurni***

Korey Hurni was born and raised in Lansing, MI, and recently earned his MFA at Western Michigan University where he served as poetry editor for *Third Coast*.

***Tim Kahl***

Tim Kahl is the author of *Possessing Yourself*, *The Century of Travel* and *The String of Islands*. He is also editor of Bald Trickster Press and Clade Song. He is the vice president and events coordinator of The Sacramento Poetry Center. He currently teaches at California State University, Sacramento and houses his father's literary estate—one volume: Robert Gerstmann's book of photos of Chile, 1932.

***Rae Liberto***

Rae Liberto is a queer writer and nurse based in Oakland, California. Her work has been featured in *Broad! Magazine*, *Lavender Review* and forthcoming in *Sinister Wisdom*.

***Nate Maxson***

Nate Maxson is a writer and performance artist. The author of several collections of poetry including *The Whisper Gallery* and *The Torture Report*. He lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

***Sydney Meeker***

Sydney Meeker studied at Oxford University for a bit then came back to SoCal for some sun. Through video games, newspapers, good ol' fashioned US propaganda, or a couple of humble poetry magazines like *The Spectrum*, hundreds of thousands have seen his writing.

***Thomas Osatchoff***

Thomas Osatchoff has resided in many places throughout the world where he has had the opportunity to develop his perspective. Writing these words, he is in Berlin; while you read these words, he is in Malaysia.

### ***Jamal Parker***

Jamal Parker is a poet, performer, and teaching artist. He's a two-time International Poetry Slam Champion having won Brave New Voices and the College Union Poetry Slam Invitational. He's a Watering Hole Fellow, and co-founder of the spoken word duo Black Boy Fly. His written work can be found in *The Altar Collective*, *Teenage Wasteland*, and *Poetry Nook*. As of now he's the artistic director of Babel Poetry Collective, where he produces and directs spoken word showcases.

### ***Dustin Pickering***

Dustin Pickering is the founder of Transcendent Zero Press, the publisher of award nominated literary quarterly *Harbinger Asylum*. He is published in *Texas Poetry Calendar*, *di-verse-city*, *Pyrokinecton*, *Muse for Women* anthology, and *Artistic Muse* among others. He is author of the chapbook *Salt and Sorrow* (Chitrangi, 2016), and has self published *The Daunting Ephemeral* and *The Future of Poetry is NOW: Bones Picking at Death's Howl*. He has featured for Houston's popular reading series Public Poetry in 2013. He currently works as an office assistant for a home health company.

### ***Emelia Reuterfors***

Emelia Reuterfors grew up in the Missouri Ozarks. She received her BA from Beloit College and MFA in poetry from the University of Arizona. Emelia currently works as a case manager for homeless veterans. She throws knives, builds shadowboxes, and collects black cats in the neighborhood.

### ***Dimitri Reyes***

Dimitri Reyes is a current student in the Rutgers-Newark's MFA program. Developing his craft in the same neighborhood where he grew up as a Latinx youth in the historic "Forest Hills" section, he breathes in Newark and exhales his experiential meditations on veganism, being Latino, his eco-ethics, and living in the inner city. Dimitri has published in the *Newark Diaries*, *HOWL*, and *Peeking Cat Poetry Magazine*.

### ***Cleo Rohn***

Cleo Rohn is a poet based in Vermont.

### ***Hannah Rubin***

Hannah Rubin is a writer, theorist, and artist who goes by a handful of names. Today they are this. Work has appeared in some publications, bicycle routes map themselves around the bends in Oakland, CA.

### ***Elijah Tubbs***

Elijah Matthew Tubbs is co-founder of *ELKE* “a little journal.” Recent work is featured in *Sonora Review*, *Connotations Press*, *Permafrost*, and elsewhere. Elijah lives and writes in Arizona.

### ***Kyle Walsh***

Kyle Walsh grew up in New Jersey and went to Cornell University. He currently resides in Berkeley, California, where he writes, drums, and works at an independent bookstore.

## **WRITERS:**

### ***Alice Ash***

Alice Ash is the co-creator of blog *Femmeuary* and has just finished her first film, *Doctor Sharpe*. Alice has been published internationally and most notably in *Mslexia*, *Galavant Journal* and *BOON*.

### ***William C. Blome***

William C. Blome writes short fiction and poetry. He lives wedged between Baltimore and Washington, DC, and he is a master’s degree graduate of the Johns Hopkins University Writing Seminars. His work has previously seen the light of day in such fine little mags as *The Alembic*, *Amarillo Bay*, *PRISM International*, and *The California Quarterly*.

### ***Deborah J. Cohan***

Deborah J. Cohan, Ph.D. is a professor of sociology at the University of South Carolina-Beaufort and widely publishes a variety of creative essays, scholarly articles, and book chapters. She is a regular blogger for *Psychology Today*. Her story titled “The Gold Pen” was selected by Utne Reader for reprinting in April 2016.

### ***SondriaWRITES***

SondriaWRITES is a working writer who hosts *IT’S LIT: A Literary Turn Up* every third Thursday of the month at Kaos Network in Leimert Park. The event is centered around reading and discussing short stories, and other forms of black literature. She is a co-host on #SNATCHPOWER Radio, a podcast where she analyses literature in a segment called “CLITERATURE.” She has written for *Earth Wind and Fire*, and her most recent publishings include her collection of short stories: “Boxes and Bottles of Booze: A Series of Therapeutic Fiction,” and “Fight in Heels”—a short story published in the #SNATCHPOWER ZINE, and adapted to film in 2016. The “FIGHT IN HEELS” audio story can be downloaded at [sondriawrites.bandcamp.com](http://sondriawrites.bandcamp.com).

## **FEATURED ARTIST:**

### ***Luka Fisher***

LA. artist. creative producer. russian translator. a&r for Records Ad Nauseam. barbie guitar soloist. [www.luka-fisher.com](http://www.luka-fisher.com)

## **DRYLAND FOUNDER:**

***Anna Ureña*** born/raised/based in South Central L.A. Has worked for numerous organizations and has been published numerous times, but mainly sits somewhere in space.

